# Sustainability Report

# 2012

The Sustainability Commission researches ideas and opportunities for sustainable living within the City of Coon Rapids. Created in 2008, this group is dedicated to finding practical ways individuals and the community can lessen their ecological footprint by focusing attention on issues regarding energy and water conservation, waste reduction and recycling, and green building materials and development. This report summarizes current practices within the City that relate to sustainable living, as well as information that can help officials plan and prepare for the future.

Facts, research and current practices in the City of Coon Rapids

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# Forestry Department

## Did You Know?

- **Large trees can add 10% to your property value while also saving you money on heating and air conditioning bills. The net cooling effect of a young, healthy tree is equivalent to 10 room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day!**

- **Leafy tree canopies catch precipitation before it reaches the ground, allowing some of it to gently drip and the rest to evaporate. This lessens the force of storms and reduces runoff and erosion. Research indicates that 100 mature tree crowns intercept about 100,000 gallons of rainfall per year, reducing runoff and providing cleaner water.**

- **Planting trees remains one of the cheapest, most effective means of drawing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.**

## What the City is Doing:

It is the goal of the Coon Rapids Forestry Division to successfully manage the urban forest environment and to promote the many benefits that trees provide, while ensuring their continued health. Coon Rapids provides the following forestry services:

Residential tree inspections: Residents may call the City Forester for an in-person or over-the-phone consultation free of charge. Please note, however, the City does not prune, perform work on, or remove trees on private property.

Arbor Day Tree Sale: Trees are offered to Coon Rapids residents at or below cost during the annual Arbor Day sale. A variety of trees are offered in order to increase species diversity in Coon Rapids. For more information see www.coonrapidsmn.gov

Tree Planting: To sustain a healthy urban forest over time, planting the right tree in the right place is crucial. The Coon Rapids Forestry Division chooses a variety of tree species that are native to our region. Planting several varieties of trees helps maintain the urban landscape, even during times of disease such as Dutch Elm. A single tree species can be wiped out quickly if stricken with disease.

Tree Maintenance: After trees are planted in parks and boulevards they need to be maintained for health and safety. Trimming and pruning, removing diseased and damaged trees and stump grinding are some of the maintenance procedures employed to sustain the urban forest.

Disease & Pest Management: Pests and disease are a continuous challenge in the urban forestry environment. Current threats to the Coon Rapids area are the Emerald Ash Borer, Oak Wilt and Oak Blight, the Gypsy Moth and the Chestnut Borer. These can have devastating effects on tree communities. Information on these pests and diseases can be found on the following websites:

MN Dept. of Natural Resources: www.dnr.state.mn.us/treecare/forest_health/index.html

Mn Dept of Agriculture: www.mda.state.mn.us/plants.aspx

Storm damage: The Coon Rapids Forestry Division works in conjunction with Public Works Divisions and local contractors to ensure that trees damaged during a storm are cleaned up in a safe and timely manner.

# What You Can Do:

There are many things you can do to help promote and sustain urban forestry in Coon Rapids:

Stay informed: Know when it is safe to prune trees to deter the spread of disease. Know how to properly use or dispose of wood from an infected tree. Know what signs to look for and contact the City Forester if you suspect a tree may be diseased so it can be removed in a timely manner to deter the spread. A great resource for information regarding trees in Minnesota can be found at www.mntrees.org

Take care of your trees: If a tree has been recently planted it needs to be watered regularly. Even mature trees need additional watering if rainfall has been significantly below normal, particularly in the fall. Be careful when mowing around tree roots. Don't prune or injure trees during vulnerable periods.

Plant native species: When you plant a native species, you give a contribution to wildlife and create an investment in the future. Native plants have evolved to thrive in their regional environments and are also beneficial to flora and fauna that depend on these species. The University of Minnesota Extension service has information for native landscaping: http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/

Remove Buckthorn: European buckthorn was introduced as an ornamental shrub in the 1930's. It has since aggressively invaded woodlands and crowded out native species thus rigorously altering native woodland ecosystems. The City partners with residents by providing weed wrenches, free of charge, to assist in removing buckthorn. Cutting buckthorn without direct chemical treatment only stimulates additional growth.

References/Resources:


1. The National Arbor Day Foundation. 2004. The value of trees to a community. www.arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm 12 Jan 2004
2. USDA Forest Service. 2003. Benefits of Urban Trees. Urban and Community Forestry: Improving our Quality of Life. Forestry Report R8-FR 71. [Atlanta, GA:] Southern Region
3. Kuo, F., Sullivan, W. 2001. Environment and Crime in the Inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime? Environment and Behavior 33(3)

# Trash & Recycling

## Did You Know?

- **Americans dump 180 million tons of garbage each year. More than 40% of it is paper, making paper the largest single component in a landfill. Using old paper to make new paper uses 30 to 50 percent less energy than making paper from trees.**

- **Every year, Americans use approximately 1 billion shopping bags, creating 300,000 tons of landfill waste. Recycling one ton of plastics saves the equivalent of 3.85 barrels of oil.**

- **The average American employee consumes 2.5 cans of soda each day at work adding up to 650 aluminum cans per year. Throwing away a single can, versus recycling it, is like pouring out six ounces of gasoline.**

## What the City is Doing:

Coon Rapids is a leader in the metro area with our well established trash and recycling programs.

Zoned pick up: Coon Rapids is divided into five zones to collect trash and recycling. This was done to limit the number of trucks on the road and to help with the City function of plowing and sweeping streets.

Service providers: Coon Rapids is an open-hauling community, allowing residents to choose one of our licensed haulers as their service provider. According to City code, each hauler must collect both trash and recycling, and many of them also offer yard waste service. Trash is collected weekly and recycling bi-weekly.

Curbside recycling: Materials that are accepted at the curb are determined by the companies providing service to the home. Recycling service is tax free which can help residents save money. Garbage hauling fees are based on the amount of trash you have. Homes with less trash and a lot of recycling will see the biggest savings through lower garbage bills.

Drop off Center: Coon Rapids has a recycling drop off center which allows residents to recycle even more than they can curbside. The drop off center focuses on materials that cannot be recycled curbside, but are common in most households. Examples include: certain metals, propane tanks, and styrofoam. The City's recycling program is funded by a SCORE grant (Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment) from Anoka County. To receive the SCORE funding, the City must focus on curbside recycling efforts, waste reduction and re-use.

## What You Can Do:

Coon Rapids provides many opportunities for reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills. By taking advantage of these resources and making small changes to consumption choices, residents can lead a more sustainable lifestyle.

Purchasing: Buy less and buy smart. Check out local Re-Use stores for disposal of unwanted items as well as for shopping for items you need. Purchase in bulk and visit local farmers markets and co-ops which supply locally grown food with less transportation and packaging.

Utilizing resources: There are many opportunities within Anoka County to help you manage your waste and recycling. Utilize your local recycling drop-off center, visit the Anoka County Hazardous Waste Facility and other local special events such as paper shredding and furniture re-use collection days. These resources can be found online through both the City and County website (www.coonrapidsmn.gov and www.anokacounty.us )

References/Resources:


1. www.coonrapidsmn.gov/Recycling
2. www.anokacounty.us/355/Recycling-Resource-Solutions
3. www.recycleminnesota.org
4. www.goodwill.org/
5. www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/www_usn_2.nsf
6. *News to reuse, Rohn Industries*
7. *www.cleanair.org*
8. *www.recyclecurbside.org*

# Green Expo

## Did You Know?

- **Americans are buying more recycled items than ever before**
- **Each household receives more than 50 pounds of unwanted, unsolicited mail every year**
- **Online websites help connect buyers to used goods like never before which is helping to encourage recycling and re-use of products**

## What the City is Doing:

Coon Rapids hosts an annual Green Expo to inform residents about sustainable-living options available in their community. The Expo is held in April each year and offers local businesses and other community organizations an opportunity to show residents the many sustainable choices available to them locally. Additionally, educational booths and seminars on recycling, energy savings, alternative power sources, organic gardening, native landscaping, and many other topics are offered.

References/Resources:

1. To find information on how to get your name off of mailing lists: www.hennepin.us/residents#recycling-hazardous-waste
2. www.craigslist.org

# Energy

## Did You Know?

- **Nationwide, Minnesota ranks 7th in natural gas consumption for residential buildings (25,500,000 BTU's annually per single family home) and 33rd in electrical consumption (4252 KWH annually)**

- **Residential energy use in Minnesota accounts for 22% of total energy use, ranking 30th among the 50 states**

- **Rebates, grants, and low interest loans are often available for energy saving upgrades for both residential and commercial buildings through local and state programs**

## What the City is Doing:

Energy savings upgrades are high on the priority list for the City of Coon Rapids.

Increasing Energy Efficiency: Coon Rapids performed energy saving upgrades to several City owned facilities using federal government stimulus funds in 2010. The upgrades included energy efficient lighting in City Hall, Fire Stations 1, 2 and 3, and the Public Works building. Newer, more efficient heating and air conditioning equipment replaced older equipment in City Hall. The systems that control these units and the building lighting were also upgraded. Water conserving plumbing fixtures were installed in City Hall and in all three fire stations when they were built or remodeled. The cumulative result of these enhancements is roughly the equivalent to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 130,000 lbs annually.

## What You Can Do:

There are many energy savings options available for residents of Coon Rapids.

Reduce energy: The first step in understanding how to reduce energy consumption is to identify current energy use, both quantity and source. By identifying sources of energy use it becomes easier to break down efforts to conserve energy into smaller increments. Tackling smaller efforts will make it easier to start on the path to energy conservation, without becoming overwhelmed by the complexities inherent in attempting to do everything at once.

Look for indicators of excess energy use: Be aware of areas within your home that are often consuming too much energy. Some common problem areas are: drafty windows and doors, lights left on, dirty furnace filters, snow melting on the roof, poor weather-stripping, etc. The Home Energy Squad, a partnership between Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy, provides low-cost energy assessments and materials (including free installation) for energy-saving devices such as compact fluorescent light bulbs, programmable thermostats and weather stripping. For more information call 1-866-222-4595 or visit HomeEnergySquad.net.

Create a plan. After you have done your research to determine your home or building's energy problem areas, create a list that includes all the potential upgrades or changes you can make to create a more energy efficient building. Assess the financial commitment you are willing and able to make, along with your abilities to implement changes versus hiring a contractor. Keep in mind that many upgrades will require specialized expertise in carpentry, electrical and piping installation, and that some of these improvements will require permits and inspections by the City or State. Devise a plan following the guidelines you set forth, keeping in mind financial resources, skill levels required, and cost-savings ideas such as rebates and low interest loans.

References/Resources:

1. Rebates: programs.dsireusa.org/system/program?state=MN
2. Energy evaluation: www.mnenergychallenge.org
3. Sealing and caulking: www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=diy.diy_index
4. Energy evaluation: www.xcelenergy.com/Save_Money_&_Energy
5. Energy saving products: www.energystar.gov/

# Water Usage

## Did You Know?

- **Did you know that seasonal summer watering more than doubles the amount of water pumped by Coon Rapids PER DAY? In 2011, the winter daily average pumped by Coon Rapids was 4,636,032 gallons but in summer that average went up to 11,456,742 gallons!**

- **Conserving water in the summer has a dramatic effect on the number of gallons produced. In the summer of 2006, the daily average water demand in Coon Rapids was 20,579,774 gallons but by 2011 that number has almost cut in half to 11,456,742 gallons.**

- **Residential users consume approximately 85% of the water pumped by Coon Rapids. This number can be reduced by using rain barrels, low flow fixtures, dual flush toilets and washing only full loads of laundry just to name a few.**

## What the City is doing:

The City of Coon Rapids recognizes water conservation to be an important priority and closely monitors water use at the city-level. In addition, the City is continually looking for ways to utilize water resources more efficiently.

Water meters: Coon Rapids is adding meters to some of the older municipal buildings. In 2009, the City completed a three year city-wide water meter replacement program. Older mechanical meters were replaced with remote read meters that measure water usage more accurately. In 2005, the city sold approximately 2.6 billion gallons of water. Unfortunately, 200 million gallons of water was unmetered or unaccounted for. Adding water meters to current city buildings will help to track this water. The improvements are planned as part of a comprehensive plan that is in place. Due to budget constraints, however, the plan has not yet been implemented.

Water saving devices: The City currently has low flow and water savings devices in all of its properties.

Watering restrictions: An odd-even sprinkling ban is in effect every year from June 1 through August 31. This means that houses with an odd numbered address water on odd numbered days and even numbered addresses water on even numbered days. If necessary during periods of drought, additional restrictions may be imposed to ensure sufficient water supply for firefighting and every day necessities.

## What You Can Do:

Water conservation at home can be achieved by following these easy steps:

Rain barrels: Rain barrels gather and store the rain from gutters to be used for watering. This can drastically reduce the high demand for water in the summer. Rain Barrels can be purchased at many hardware stores and online at: www.recycleminnesota.org

Hygiene: Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush. There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Just wet your brush and fill a glass for mouth rinsing.

Check for leaks: Check your faucets and pipes for leaks. A small drip from a worn faucet washer can waste 20 gallons of water per day. Larger leaks can waste hundreds of gallons.

Install water saving devices: There are many options for saving water in daily practices that use a lot of water. Installing a low flow shower head and calibrating your toilet to use less water are a few ideas. These items can be purchased locally or are available for free if you are a Centerpoint Energy customer. www.centerpointenergy.com/services/naturalgas/residential/efficiencyrebatesandprograms/lowflowshowerheadandfaucetaeratorrebates/MN/

Irrigation systems: Minnesota State Statute requires all automatic landscape irrigation systems to have technology that monitors moisture levels. This technology can inhibit or interrupt watering during periods of sufficient moisture. The technology must be adjustable either by the end user or the professional practitioner of landscape irrigation services.

References/Resources:


1. www.wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/index.php
2. http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/water-conservation-tips
3. www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=103G.298
4. City of Coon Rapids water department

# Stormwater Management

## Did You Know?

- **During a 1" rainfall 0.6 gallons of rainwater will fall on a square foot of roof. That amounts to about 460 gallons of water from the roof of the typical 1950's two-bedroom story and a half home in Coon Rapids.**
- **During a 1" rainfall about 389,740,000 gallons of water will accumulate across the city of Coon Rapids.**
- **Stormwater can pollute local waterways since most runoff is not treated. It goes directly into local rivers, lakes and streams carrying pollutants like soil, fertilizers, pesticides, oil, soap, litter, organic matter, and pet feces.**

## What the City is Doing?

Storm water management practices address both the quantity and flow of stormwater as well as water quality. Storm water discharge is not metered but water quality data is collected regularly.

Partnerships: The Anoka Conservation District is a non-regulatory, county level subdivision of state government that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to manage natural resources. One example of a recent program encouraged the installation of rain gardens on city lots. Coon Rapids has expanded such partnerships and embarked on some neighborhood level studies and pilot projects. Coon Creek Watershed Manages groundwater and surface water drainage systems to prevent property damage, maintain hydrologic balance, and protect water quality for the safety and enjoyment of citizens and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

Best Practices: Coon Rapids has prepared and follows a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in accordance with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency requirements. Key components of the plan include: public education and outreach, constructing storm water runoff control structures, detecting and eliminating illicit discharge and post construction stormwater management for new and redeveloped sites.

Maintenance: The Coon Rapids Streets Division is responsible for inspecting and maintaining the stormwater system in Coon Rapids. Storm drains, curbs and gutters are all important components that ensure proper drainage, settling of solids and debris, infiltration and eventually stormwater discharge. The city's street sweeping program keeps debris off the roadways, which in turn, keeps it out of the storm drains and out of our lakes, streams and rivers.

## What You Can Do:

There are many simple and inexpensive options available to Coon Rapids residents.

Infiltrate water: Permeable pavement, rain barrels and rain gardens are strategies that Coon Rapids residents can apply to their own lots to infiltrate water on-site and decrease their contribution to the storm sewers. Larger sites can look to infiltration ponds and green roofs as options.

Lawn care: Responsible lawn care and fertilizing will keep excess phosphorus and nitrogen out of our lakes and streams. On a larger scale, buffer zones around water bodies and shoreline stabilization projects can help reverse some of our water quality issues by filtering out sediment and debris.

Car Care: Washing your vehicle on the lawn will keep soapy water from entering the storm drain and will drain into the ground instead. Do not discard oil or other chemicals in the street or storm drain. Instead, bring them to the Coon Rapids Recycling Center or the Anoka County Hazardous Waste Facility for proper disposal.

References/Resources:


1. Coon Creek Watershed District: www.cooncreekwd.org
2. Anoka Conservation District: www.anokaswcd.org
3. Why watersheds are important: www.dnr.state.mn.us/watersheds/index.html
4. Clean Water Minnesota: www.cleanwatermn.org
5. Rain Gardens: www.extension.umn.edu/environment/water/property-owners/rain-garden/ www.metroblooms.org/index.php
6. University of Minnesota Extension Service, www.extension.umn.edu
7. City of Coon Rapids water department, www.coonrapidsmn.gov

# Transportation

## Did You Know?

- **Public transportation saves fuel and reduces congestion. Americans living in areas served by public transportation save 785 million hours in travel time and 640 million gallons of fuel annually in congestion reduction alone by utilizing public transportation.**

- **Public transportation saves money. Households that take public transportation and live with one fewer car can save more than $9,900 per year.**

- **A regular rush-hour driver wastes an average of 99 gallons of gasoline a year due to traffic. The average cost of the time lost in rush hour traffic is $1,160 per person.**

## What the City is Doing:

The City has taken on the role of supporting various transportation options, by providing safe routes to the different transportation options via trails and sidewalks.

Marketing: The City of Coon Rapids supplements, as appropriate, the Metropolitan Council's current marketing and communications efforts that aim to increase ridership on busses and commuter rail stops.

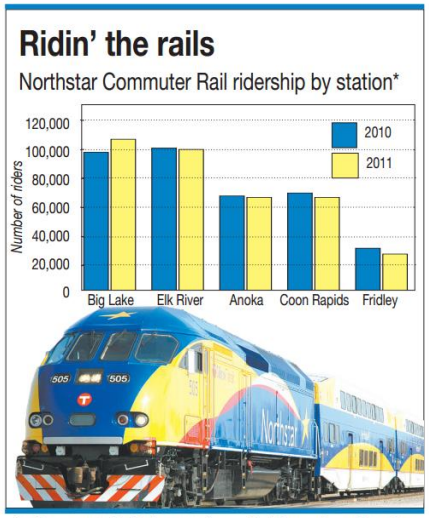
Future development: The City re-zoned parcels adjacent to the rail stop to support future potential transit-oriented development.

Sidewalks and trails: The City has long term plans to increase sidewalk and trail connections to the Northstar Commuter rail stop and the bus park and ride lots in the future.

## What You Can Do:

Reduce your impact on the environment while saving money.

Save fuel, reduce congestion, and save money: Even one trip a week using alternative transportation options proves to be a significant cost-savings measure for families. When possible, take other modes of transportation, such as rail,bus,rideshare, bike, or walk. Go to Anoka County Commute Solutions at www.anokacounty.us/336/Commute-Solutions for more information.




* Does not include number of riders departing from Minneapolis. That number was 340,372 in 2010 and 333,674 in 2011.

*Source: Metro Transit*

References/Resources:

1. Minnesota Department of Transportation www.dot.state.mn.us/library/statistics.html
2. American Transportation Association
3. Center for Transportation Excellence

# In Summary:

The Coon Rapids City Council is committed to creating an environment where sustainable community initiatives are developed for businesses and residents that will benefit the community far into the future. The goal is to provide residents of Coon Rapids sustainable alternatives that are easy to replicate and affordable to implement. The Sustainability Commission was created to support the City Council in this mission, by researching and recommending options to achieve these goals. The Sustainability Commission supports the City Council in helping to maximize the use of tax dollars, while exploring clean air and water initiatives, helping to improve working and living environments and building a community that is sustainable economically, environmentally and socially; a community that will thrive for future generations. For more information on the Sustainability Commission contact Colleen Sinclair at csinclair@coonrapidsmn.gov or by phone: 763-767-6485